



English II: Writing: Module 3: Lesson 3: Section 4

Analyze Use of Stylistic and Rhetorical Devices

Visual Imagery

Instructions: In the following excerpt from *Dandelion Wine*, Ray Bradbury uses many rhetorical and stylistic devices to add aesthetic enjoyment to his text. Read the excerpt and then read the additional instructions and answer the questions that follow.

“About seven o’clock you could hear the chairs scraping back from the tables, someone experimenting with a yellow-toothed piano, if you stood outside the dining-room window and listened. Matches being struck, the first dishes bubbling in the suds and tinkling on the wall racks, somewhere, faintly, a phonograph playing. And then as the evening changed the hours, at house after house on the twilight streets, under the immense oaks and elms, on shady porches, people would begin to appear, like those figures who tell good or bad weather in rain-or-shine clocks.

Uncle Bert, perhaps Grandfather, then Father, and some of the cousins; the men all coming out first into the syrupy evening, blowing smoke, leaving the women’s voices behind in the cooling-warm kitchen to set their universe aright. Then the first male voices under the porch brim, the feet up, the boys fringed on the worn steps or wooden rails where sometime during the evening something, a boy or a geranium pot, would fall off.

At last, like ghosts hovering momentarily behind the door screen, Grandma, Great-grandma, and Mother would appear, and the men would shift, move, and offer seats. The women carried varieties of fans with them, folded newspapers, bamboo whisks, or perfumed kerchiefs, to start the air moving about their faces as they talked.

What they talked of all evening long, no one remembered the next day. It wasn’t important to anyone what the adults talked about; it was only important that the sounds came and went over the delicate ferns that bordered the porch on three sides; it was only important that the darkness filled the town like black water being poured over the house, and that the cigars glowed and that the conversations went on, and on. The female gossip moved out, disturbing the first mosquitoes so they danced in frenzies on the air. The male voices invaded the old house timbers; if you closed your eyes and put your head down against the floor boards you could hear the men’s voices rumbling like a distant, political earthquake, constant, unceasing, rising or falling a pitch.

Sitting on the summer-night porch was so good, so easy and so reassuring that it could never be done away with. These were rituals that were right and lasting: the lighting of pipes, the pale hands that moved knitting needles in the dimness, the eating of foil-wrapped, chilled Eskimo Pies, the coming and going of all the people. . . .

Oh, the luxury of lying in the fern night and the grass night and the night of susurrant, slumbrous voices weaving the dark together. The grownups had forgotten he was there, so still, so quiet Douglas lay, noting the plans they were making for his and their own futures. And the voices chanted, drifted, in moonlit clouds of cigarette smoke while the moths, like late appleblossoms come alive, tapped faintly about the far street lights, and the voices moved on into the coming years. . . .”



Instructions: Now read each passage below. Each uses a device explained in the lesson. Identify which device each passage uses, and write about how the device affects the reading of the text. An example response to the first passage is shown below. Use this basic structure as a guide to write a response about the aesthetic effects of rhetorical and stylistic devices in the Bradbury passage.

Remember that you are not writing a “general” response to the passage. You are writing about the aesthetic effect a particular stylistic or rhetorical device has on the reading of the passage. You will need to highlight and identify the device in each passage before you write your response. You can highlight in this document by using the highlighting tools that may be available in your software program, or you can print this file and highlight it by hand.

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When you’re finished writing about each passage, mouse over the sample response button to see a possible response that includes the words you should have highlighted.

PASSAGE ONE: “Matches being struck, the first dishes bubbling in the suds and tinkling on the wall racks, somewhere, faintly, a phonograph playing.”

State the source and author: In this excerpt from *Dandelion Wine*, “Ray Bradbury . . .”

Identify the device and provide a quote using the device: Uses onomatopoeia: dishes . . . tinkling on the wall racks

Comment on the effect on the reader: So that readers can actually hear the dishes being put on the rack. The word “tinkling” sounds a bit like the sound it describes.

Comment on the way this particular image is used to add to the meaning:

By using the word “tinkling” rather than other possible words or phrases such as “clattering” or “hanging,” Bradbury emphasizes the pleasant sound that brings to his mind very pleasant memories.

Sample Response



PASSAGE TWO: “It wasn’t important to anyone what the adults talked about; it was only important that the sounds came and went over the delicate ferns that bordered the porch on three sides; it was only important that the darkness filled the town like black water being poured over the houses, and that the cigars glowed and that the conversations went on, and on.”

Highlight the phrase that uses a device.

Identify the device:

Write a brief response in the box below.

Sample Response

PASSAGE THREE: “Sitting on the summer-night porch was so good, so easy and so reassuring that it could never be done away with. These were rituals that were right and lasting: the lighting of pipes, the pale hands that moved knitting needles in the darkness, the eating of foil-wrapped, chill Eskimo Pies, the coming and going of all the people.”

Highlight the phrase that uses a device.

Identify the device:

Write a brief response in the box below.

Sample Response



PASSAGE FOUR: “Oh, the luxury of lying in the fern night and the grass night and the night of susurrant, slumbrous voices weaving the dark together. The grownups had forgotten he was there, so still, so quiet Douglas lay, noting the plans they were making for his and their own futures.”

Highlight the phrase that uses a device.

Identify the device:

Write a brief response in the box below.

Sample Response